

Start here.

The Guilty Silence.

Silence. Silence was all that could be perceived of this night. Silence and horror, and that all too familiar stench of a body decomposing; air redolent with the fumes of mouldering flesh.

Detective Lieutenant Keoni, standing tall at 6 ft 5, hovered above the corpse, the analytics of his mind taking in the battered features of a face that was no more. In any case, he would observe the expression on the victim's face - it usually gave him some indication as to what had happened - but this face revealed no secrets; nothing but the disfigured sight of a woman whose identity had been erased, and who would now be carrying secrets to her grave. Keoni glanced around ~~at~~ the apartment complex, hearing the taunting echoes of broken city cries, before once again reading the note that he had received only a half an hour ago.

'Frightened, she screams,
but you cannot hear her screams,
She cries aloud, a sob,
but you cannot see her tears.
Her scream and tears become
one flesh, and then
no more,

for she is no more ...

~ 24 7th Street ~

...

I glue the ~~center~~ end of the envelope to its centre, concealing the contents of the letter. Looking up, I see her lying ... motionless.

...

"Mulrone, have you find out who sent the letter?"

"No Lieutenant Keoni. We tried to track the location, but we had no luck. It's almost as if someone placed the letter on our doorstep."

"Keoni," Sergeant Buekleef, the new detective - who was currently an hour late - walked in, carrying a basket ^{of cupcakes and ~~stones~~ a stone} in her arms. "These cupcakes have just come in for you. Please take them now. I have my reunion next week and I can't afford to eat any. They used to call me 'fatso'. Class of '98, here I come!"

Keoni shot out of his seat with the fury of a ricocheting bullet, snatching the basket out of her arms. As quickly as he had grabbed hold of it, he dropped it to the ground, breaking through

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The front doors with an urgency that far exceeded human capability. ~~There was~~ Eleven different cupcakes, one stone, two words: Milson's Port.

...

I hear her cry out for help, like a child begging for ~~help~~^{water} in an endless drought. And then the musical contour of her voice recedes; dies to an eternal silence.

...

Keoni drove his fist into the wall; once, twice, thrice, until ~~the~~ his skin felt raw, uncovered, peeled. He glanced down at the woman's body, lying limp on the ground, cursing himself for not having made it on time. Had it even been the killer's intention to send him the clues before murdering his victims, or did he purposefully delay?"

Keoni took out his phone and dialled "M" for Mulrone.

...

I ~~seal~~^{place} the final letter into the envelope, sealing it with the kiss of death. We'll see how smart they really are.

...

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He was running but the fumes were rising and it was becoming difficult to breathe. In a few seconds ~~that~~ he would be consumed by the flames, his face devoured. In a few seconds... Keoni woke up in a pool of sweat. He could still feel the blaze as if the fire had burned him alive. He could still smell ~~flatt~~ burning flesh as if it had only happened a few seconds ago, rather than the twenty five years it had truly been. The scars were there, and they would never be leaving his disfigured face.

"Keoni, the results have come back. Last night's victim was Charlotte Scott," Buckley handed Keoni the files.

He roamed through the papers, one key detail taking precedence in his mind. "Bingo. Our fourth victim born in 1980. We've found a β connection."

Before he could analyse the clues further, the fax machine lit up, and a paper flew out.

'BURN BABY BURN!

OH, NO WAIT. SHE ALREADY HAS.'

'Malrone, ~~Andi~~ were you able to track the dispatcher.'

'No, boss. Whoever sent it must have encrypted the location path and I can't seem to encode it.'

~~When~~ Keoni glanced down at the plain, white paper, blank except for the short message that had been written on it. Blank... except for the indiscernible ~~image~~ silhouette he could just make out beneath the letters. He scanned the paper, focusing on the concealed image within the paper. Whoever ~~had~~ sent it, had forgotten to disguise the watermark branded in the paper. ~~As~~ The computer found a single match. ^{Watton's} ~~Watson's~~ Warehouse; only ~~one~~ one street down from the ^{urban,} apartment complex where the first murder had taken place.

Twenty-two armed police officers broke through the warehouse doors.

A pile of scattered papers on the centre table illuminated the dark depot, and the gentle movement of a figure sent fifteen officers tackling a man in his early thirties to the ground. →

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"You've found me at last. The 'Decade Killer', I presume you call me."

Keoni ~~then~~ closely observed Walton's face; the triumphant grin and the knowing eyes that pierced his own.

"Detective, what do I owe this honour to?" The inbound criminal mocked the approaching Lieutenant.

"There's one ~~that~~ thing that I don't understand. What was your motive. Why kill victims from the ~~1980s~~ 1980s? Why not a whole heap of random years?"

Walton didn't reply. Instead he posed Keoni a question of his own.

"Do you remember the ~~1988~~ nineteen eighty ~~24~~ execution of V. Walton?"

"What does that have to do with anything?" Keoni questioned the inmate.

"Walton, was my father. He was the last person executed in New South Wales for murder, except, poor man, couldn't hurt a fly even if he wanted to. ~~He~~ He was innocent of any crime yet his life was taken away."

"Again, what does that have to do with —"

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~~Decade~~

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"You believe that I am the ~~detective~~ killer. Why is that Detective?"

"Because you admitted to it. That and the letters you sent us from the warehouse."

"So you have actual evidence proving that I committed the ~~murders~~ ^{crime}. I might have sent the letters, but how can you be sure that I committed the murders?"

"Like I said, you admitted to it."

Walton let out a laugh.

"So why is it then, that when a man tells you that he is innocent, you don't believe him until you find evidence acquitting him? But if he does say he committed the crime, you take his word for it? ~~You~~ Don't you need genuine evidence, since words are no longer truth enough? You, Detective, punish the innocent and let the guilty walk free."

Keoni drew back, startled, unsure of what the man was trying to say. Walton's eyes bore into his face, into every aching wound, setting him on edge.

"Your weakness is your disfigurement, Detective — those scars on your face. Society's weakness is injustice."

"Keoni, it's time for us to leave," Sergeant Buckley called out from the corner of the cell. "

Walton looked up at her with abhorrence and disgust in his eyes.

"Guilty people stand right before your eyes, and you just watch them walk away. "

...

I am not a killer. Truth be told, every victim was already either dead or dying when I stumbled upon them. I sent these letters to ^{the police to} try and make them see the truth of the matter; to fulfil ~~my~~ ^{my} promise ^{of seeking justice for} to my father's sake. The killer is still out there, while I, an innocent man, am locked here in this cell, not because they have evidence against me, but because I 'admitted' to the crime. Because they don't seek for evidence; they wait for ~~some~~ people to give them answers. And when they don't find the evidence, and when they don't find the answers, they punish the innocent, because that is the sick world that we live in today. Today, and tomorrow and all the days thenceforth. →

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Keoni walked behind Buckley, letting
Watton's words sink in.

"Buckley, you mentioned that your
reunion is coming up. ~~When~~ what
year did you say you graduated?"

"Nineteen ^{ninety-}eighty, she replied with a
smile. "Although I can definitely say
that I wouldn't mind never ~~say~~
seeing a few faces again. I used to
get bullied."

"So, you were born in nineteen-eighty?"
he questioned.

"That's right."

Nineteen eighty. 1980.

~~the~~ Guilty people ~~walk~~ stand right
before your eyes, and you just watch
them walk away.

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